



NOXIOUS WEED

MANAGEMENT PLAN

- SIX YEAR REVISION -

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***MONTANA
FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS***

REGION 3



REVISED WEED MANAGEMENT PLAN

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Executive Summary

Region 3 of the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) in southwestern Montana is concerned about the impact of noxious weeds on natural and cultural resources, both on land managed by the department, and on adjacent property. In order to reduce the impacts of noxious weeds, protect resources, and fulfill legal mandates, the Region first implemented a comprehensive region-wide noxious weed management plan in 1993.

This updated Noxious Weed Management Plan for Region 3, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks describes noxious weed management for ten State Parks (SPs), twelve Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), 86 Fishing Access Sites (FASs), and three Administrative Sites, totaling over 153,707 acres. The plan outlines an Integrated Weed Management (IWM) approach that includes management goals, strategies, and control techniques, based on and consistent with federal, state, and local weed management regulations, policies, and goals, including Montana's Weed Management Plan (Duncan 2000). FWP Management goals are as follows:

Management Goals

- Prevent invasions of new noxious weeds; eliminate, reduce, or contain current infestations
- Comply with noxious weed control laws
- Manage noxious weed infestations without significant adverse environmental impacts
- Maintain healthy, natural plant communities that resist weed invasion
- Minimize impacts on other land from weed infestations on FWP land
- Cooperate with private and public land managers in weed control activities
- Educate the public to increase awareness of noxious weeds and their negative impacts
- Participate in research and development of new weed control strategies and techniques

Strategies, including prevention, eradication, reduction, and containment, are based on the species, size, density, and location of the infestation, as well as resource, environmental, and safety concerns, and legal requirements. Techniques for prevention currently employed include promoting healthy plant communities, limiting disturbances, revegetating, and educating the

public. Region 3 utilizes mechanical; cultural; chemical; and biological methods for control of existing infestations.

The process of choosing and prioritizing strategies and specific control techniques includes constraints and limitations on control techniques imposed by landscape and land use features. Landscape features that limit weed control techniques include the presence of surface water or shallow groundwater; threatened, endangered, or sensitive (TES) species; cultural and historical remnants, and significant vegetation or habitat types. Land use features include high levels of human use, and biologic control insectories. Special Management Areas may be created to reflect these features unique weed management requirements.

Partnerships with federal, state, and local agencies and groups, as well as landowners, are essential for successful noxious weed management. This includes two year Cooperative Weed Agreements with County Weed Districts within Region 3, as required by House Bill 395, as well as participation in partnerships including the Big Hole River Project and the Ruby River Weed Project, and other public and private land managers. All County Weed Districts within Region 3 have been asked for input in creating this plan, which will be updated every six years.

This plan, by revising and updating the original plan, will not result in any significant impacts to the human or natural environment not already addressed by the original EA, does not require a new EA. **However, an environmental impact checklist, derived from the environmental assessments of noxious weed management plans for Region 3 and Region 8 (now part of Region 3 as the Helena Resource Office [HARO]), must be completed prior to any weed management activity.**

Budget Requirements and Trends

During the next six year period, the department will place greater emphasis on prevention through education, monitoring, and better land stewardship. The Region hopes to decrease reliance on herbicides by utilizing other control techniques in an integrated approach. This will entail a renewed commitment, in funding, resources, and personnel. Funding for inventorying noxious weeds, and monitoring control techniques, should be prioritized. However, low funding will likely continue to slow progress, given current trends.

Montana's Weed Management Plan Review Draft (Duncan 2000) recommends a **minimum** of \$20 per acre for on-the-ground management to reduce infestations five percent annually. In addition to the on-the-ground management costs, other important costs include administration, estimated at 10% of the on-the-ground budget, and research, at 15%.

Based on the budgetary requirements discussed above, funding levels in Region 3 are significantly below the minimum recommended for reductions in noxious weed infestations. For example, \$7821 was earmarked annually for weed control on Region 3 FASs for fiscal years

1999 and 2000, while \$5202 was earmarked for SPs. If 9% (figure used by the Montana Weed Management Plan for percentage of acres infested in Montana), or 515 acres, of land contained in FASs are infested with noxious weeds, based on state-wide infestation rates, then at a minimum \$10,300 is needed annually to reduce infestations. At the same time, funding is lacking for administration and research, which in turn directs funds needed for on-the-ground management. However, regardless of these limitations, the Region will continue to manage noxious weeds as an integral part of its commitment to protect natural resources and provide sustainable recreational opportunities to the public.

